



A Note on Industrial Activity at Cinder Hill, Tottington

N. Tyson

Cinder Hill Tenement in Tottington (S.D.76751700) probably derives its name from slag heaps left by early iron workers, still much in evidence when the first farmhouse was built perhaps in the late seventeenth century, but which had been largely removed for mending roads etc. in the early nineteenth century. Red Brook on the western boundary of the tenement, was harnessed in the eighteenth century to power a small engine house, via a leat taken from a weir 75 metres upstream, to a small pond which probably powered an overshot wheel in a building on its south side. Evidence of stone foundations are detectable over an area of approximately 140 square metres, and the banks of the pond (now drained) survive to an internal height of 1 metre. A second later leat ran from the south west corner of the pond for a distance of 200 metres down the west side of the valley, supplemented by small ponds en route to the site of Cinder Hill Factory, where it would have attained a good fall for an overshot wheel. Nothing remains of this later factory. Downstream from here Red Brook became Holcombe Brook, eventually emptying into the river Irwell near Summerseat, having provided an important water supply to the valley industries.

Cinder Hill lies in a part of Holcombe in Tottington manor, given by the Norman lord Roger de Montbegon in 1176 to the monks of Monk Bretton near Barnsley, a gift reinforced by a further charter of 1236. It seems the monks experienced some difficulty holding on to their land for in the de Lacy Compoti for 1295-6 "Loss of rent in Tottington of one plot of land surrendered to the Prior of Brettone as his right. In future to be effaced from the Compotus 5s.91/2d." occurs (1). In 1346 the Prior of Monk Bretton claimed against Queen Isabel 1500 acres of pasture and 1500 acres of wood in Tottington, of which Henry de Lacy had disseised a former Prior in the time of Edward I. In the time of Richard III Holcombe had been annexed to the Duchy of Lancaster, but the monks claim was admitted and they received the advowson of Darton near Monk Bretton as compensation.

Medieval iron working in Tottington manor is evidenced by entries in the de Lacy Compoti for 1305-6 when "Firewood sold for 1 forge for 16 weeks £1.16.8d." is recorded, and earlier in 1295-6 with the entry "Nothing for oaks, hucetum and ore this year". (2) implying that ore had previously been sold there. Documentary evidence for iron working in Rossendale at this time becomes scarce by the mid fourteenth century (3).

After the Dissolution the monks lands were in 1546 granted to John Braddyll of Whalley (4). Much of Holcombe and Holcombe Brook was resold to the Holt family of Stubley Hall near Rochdale (5).

In 1870 James Kerr visited a number of sites in Rossendale (including Cinder Hill, Holcombe), identified two of them as belonging to a family of Tudor cutlers and concluded the remainder were of a similar date (6). A branch of the Ainsworth family were also cutlers in late seventeenth century Holcombe, where the family had been established certainly since the fifteenth century. In 1688 Thomas Ainsworth was sub tenant at Cinder Hill to a branch of the Fletcher family of Bolton, when the tenement comprised "A messuage other buildings and 12 acres of ancient copyhold land"(7). However, firm evidence of either the cutlery trade there or a date for iron working, is lacking.

By the early eighteenth century the Brandwood family who had also recently acquired premises at Holcombe Hey Fold, seem to have been in possession of Cinder Hill, and probably rebuilt or enlarged the farmhouse as evidenced by a date stone of 1715 once visible on the building (8). It was probably during the Brandwoods tenancy that the mill pond and upper leat were constructed, to power a suite of primitive textile machinery at a time in the late eighteenth century when adequate water supplies of the district provided opportunities for an expanding textile trade. The earliest mention of the site in a survey of Tottington Lower End compiled in 1794 records Lawrence Brandwood as tenant, with his son John occupying premises which included one engine house (9). Earlier in 1767 James Shuttleworth aged 8 was apprenticed to John Brandwood, fustian weaver (10). Five other engine houses are listed for the district in 1794 in addition to six factory buildings, two walk mills, three engine buildings and Robert Peels mill complex at Barwood Lee, demonstrating the extent of industrial development by this time.

The survey also records that "All mills, factory and engine buildings are valued 1/4 higher than common cottage buildings of the same size, because of the advantage of the water which works the machinery ". The rateable value of Cinder Hill engine house was £4, out of a total rateable value for the whole tenement of £19.

John Brandwood left Cinder Hill for Holcombe Hey before his fathers death in 1802, when the engine house was occupied separately from the farm by John Pennington, cotton carder, who had previously held an engine house at Bolholt near Walshaw and simultaneously occupied premises at Wood Hey, Holcombe. By 1811 John Pennington seems to have transferred his interest at Wood Hey to his kinsman James Pennington, who in that year as a cotton spinner took on three apprentices (11), and remained there until his death in 1833. Also in 1811 Thomas Pennington another kinsman became occupier of the engine house at Cinder Hill and subsequently the farm, where he stayed until 1823 when the entire tenement passed to John Parker, member of a local textile family.

On acquiring Cinder Hill John Parker converted the old engine house into two cottages thereby reducing the rate from £2.15.0. to 15s. He extended the leat for 200 metres downstream where he built a new cotton factory and stable, improving access to the site by obtaining liberty to "...pass and repass on foot and with horses, carts carriages etc. through the road leading by or through Holcombe Hey Fold estate..." (12). This necessitated the construction of a cart road, strengthening the water banks and bridging the leat near its exit from the pond. He continued until 1841 then surrendered the factory to his son John Parker a cotton spinner of Bolton, who ten years later surrendered it to John Wild of Ramsbottom. By 1859 occupancy had passed to Thomas Ogden and the mill converted to steam. Originally the mill had spun cotton but later changed to woollen weaving, and Rooney records how carters left the factory with the finished product for Manchester at 4a.m., arriving back home late the same night with yarns and weft for the mill (13). After two subsequent occupiers in 1862 and 1866 the factory, probably suffering repercussions of the cotton famine became empty in 1868.

John Parkers original mill was a three storey building with a total area of 731 sq. yards, containing a staircase of 22 sq. yards also three stories. By 1864 it had been extended to include a dust room 15 sq. yards, engine house 20 sq. yards, warehouse (two stories) 288 sq. yards, willow rooms which housed toothed cylinders used for opening and cleaning wool, 131 sq. yards, gas house or singeing room 80 sq. yards, boiler house 32 sq. yards, other additions totalling 192 sq. yards, and a chimney 15 yards high (14).

Between 1871 and 1875 the mill enjoyed a brief revival as a bleach works, finally closing down in 1876 (15). Throughout this period the engine house cottages seem to have been occupied intermittently. After conversion they had been named 'Bottoms', a name they retained until their demise in the early twentieth century, by which time the factory was in ruins.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Eric Foster for translating the Latin documents consulted.

References

1. Lyons.P.A. Two Compoti of the Lancs. and Cheshire manors of Henry de Lacy. Chet.Soc. Vol.112 (1884). p.184.
2. ibid. p.120.
3. Tupling.G.H. The Economic History of Rossendale. Chet.Soc. (N.S) Vol. 86 (1927). p.29.
4. Victoria County History,Lancs. Vol.5 (1911) p.145.
5. Coupe.G. Tottington Hall Through Five Centuries. (1987) p.8.
6. Kerr.J. On the remains of some old bloomeries, formerly existing in Lancs. T.H.S.L.C. Vol.12 (1872) pp.57-70.
7. L.R.O. DDHC1. 3/202
8. Rooney.R. The Story Of My Life. (1947). p.28.
9. L.R.O. DDK. 118.
10. Bury Ref. Lib. L21/3/22. 1-178. mf.
11. Bury Ref.Lib. L21/4/2. 1-39. mf
12. L.R.O. DDHC1. 439.
13. Op. cit. Rooney.
14. L.R.O. PUB. 8/22.
15. L.R.O. PUB. 11/1-11/28.